

## Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 EB-11 COME-00 AGR-20

DRC-01 /183 W

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R 071558Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1698

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT VE

SUBJ: VENEZUELAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN: AD AND COPEI BATTLE OVER

SEIZURE OF POWDERED MILK

REF: CARACAS 9297

1. THE AD-COPEI ELECTION CAMPAIGN STRUGGLE HAS INTENSIFIED DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS, WITH THE CENTER OF ATTENTION PASSING FROM THE "BATTLE OF THE POLLS" TO A COPEI CHARGE THAT AD IS HOARDING POWDERED MILK. THE LATEST ROUND WAS TOUCHED OFF BY THE SEIZURE BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES (COPEI APPOINTEES) OF 100,000 KILOS OF POWDERED MILK BELONGING TO THE FIRM ILAPECA, NOVEMBER 1 IN MARACAIBO ON THE ALLEGATION THAT IT WAS BEING HOARDED ILLEGALLY. COPEI HAS NOTED THAT THE MILK WAS STORED IN A WAREHOUSE USED BY AD TO FABRICATE CAMPAIGN PROPAGANDA, THAT THE PRESIDENT OF ILAPECA IS AN AD DEPUTY, AND THAT ANOTHER AD DEPUTY FORCEABLY TRIED TO PREVENT THE AUTHORITIES FROM MAKING THE SEIZURE. IN STATEMENTS BY ACTING COPEI PRESIDENT GODOFREDO GONZALEZ AND OTHER PARTY LEADERS AND IN A MASSIVE BARRAGE OF MEDIA PROPAGANDA, COPEI HAS CHARGED THAT THIS PROVES AD IS BEHIND AN EFFORT TO CAUSE CONSUMER SCARCITIES AND SO GAIN AN ELECTORAL ADVANTAGE. IN STATEMENTS BY ITS LEADERS, INCLUDING PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ AND PARTY PRESIDENT

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GONZALO BARRIOS, AND AN EQUALLY LARGE PROPAGANDA BARRAGE, AD HAS

ANGRILY DENIED THE HOARDING CHARGE AND HAS TERMED THE SEIZURE OF THE MILK A GRAVE POLITICAL PROVOCATION. AD CLAIMS THAT THE WAREHOUSE WHERE THE MILK WAS STORED WAS ABANDONED AS AN AD PROPAGANDA LOCALE SEVERAL MONTHS AGO (ALTHOUGH PRESS PHOTOS SHOW AD CAMPAIGN SIGNS IN THE WAREHOUSE), AND THAT IN ANY EVENT THE SEIZED MILK IN QUESTION IS ONLY A SMALL PORTION OF TOTAL INVENTORY OF ILAPECA. THE OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL IS INVESTIGATING THE MATTER, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME AD LEADERS HAVE CALLED FOR THE INTERPELLATION OF THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT IN A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE DELEGATED COMMISSION OF CONGRESS.

2. COMMENT: THIS LATEST ROUND IN THE AD-COPEI ELECTORAL BATTLE FOLLOWS THE EXPECTED DETERMINATION OF THE SUPREME ELECTORAL COUNCIL THAT IT HAS NO BASIS FOR PROHIBITING THE DIVULGING OF THE RESULTS OF ELECTORAL OPIMAON POLLS (SEE REFTTEL). IF IN A PROPAGANDA SENSE AD CAN BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE WON THE "BATTLE OF THE POLLS" (AT LEAST MONENTARILY), IT APPEARS THAT COPEI HAS MADE A COMEBACK WITH THE SEIZURE OF THE POWDERED MILK. MOST OF THE INVECTIVE PASSING BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES IS FOR PUBLIC CONSUMPTION WITH A VIEW TO ITS IMPACT ON THE DECEMBER 9 ELECTIONS, BUT SOME INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS HAVE REPORTEDLY BECOME WORRIED ENOUGH TO CALL ON PRESIDENT CALDERA AND EX-PRESIDENT BETANCOURT TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE TO TRY TO DIMINISH PROPAGANDA EXCESSES BY THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTIES. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE SUPREME ELECTORAL COUNCIL WILL REPORTEDLY INITIATE PRIVATE MEETINGS WITH THE SECRETARIES GENERAL OF THE VARIOUS PARTIES WITH THIS END IN MIND.

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**Subject:** VENEZUELAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN: AD AND COPEI BATTLE OVER SEIZURE OF POWDERED MILK  
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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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